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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000092

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PDP CONGRESSES, CLASHES LAY GROUND FOR
NATIONAL CONVENTION

¶11. (SBU) Summary: People's Democratic Party (PDP) state congresses held February 28 throughout the south reflect the fractured nature of the party. Party factions in Oyo, Enugu, and Anambra states held parallel congresses in defiance of court injunctions. The congresses in Edo and Bayelsa states worsened divisions within the party; conversely, the Delta state selection of consensus candidates ended months of intra-party fighting. It is unclear whether the national convention March 8 in Abuja will be an anarchic free-for-all involving rival state delegations, or whether back-room deals will be struck in advance. Also uncertain is the extent to which the party leadership elections will be open and fairly contested. End Summary.

Southwest: Oyo State Under Godfather's Sway

¶12. (SBU) Thousands of PDP members, including Oyo State Governor Alao-Akala and Oyo godfather Lamidi Adedibu, held their state congress on Feb 28 in Ibadan and selected a pre-ordained slate of delegates. The congress was held in defiance of a February 26 State High Court order barring the congress pending determination of whether the consensus candidate selection is allowed by the party's constitution. This selection requires that all party members agree on the candidate's qualification for the position, rather than awarding the candidacy to the person with the majority of votes. Several PDP faction leaders reported they were attacked by hoodlums sent by Adedibu and Akala, a claim which the police are investigating.

Southeast: Anambra's Uba Faction Defies Court Order

¶13. (SBU) Supporters of Enugu Governor Sullivan Chime and those of his former political godfather, immediate past Governor Chimaroke Nnamani, held two separate party congresses. PDP National Secretary Bernard Eze approved Nnamani's congress, and even directed PDP monitors from Abuja to participate in it; one of these, however, declined and instead monitored Chime's congress. The majority of federal legislators from Enugu participated in Nnamani's congress as

well.

¶4. (SBU) Supporters of Chime and Nnamani also clashed March 3rd at the PDP National Secretariat in Abuja. Nnamani's supporters held a rally outside PDP national headquarters in support of Nnamani's pick for State Chairman Ray Nnaji, and the PDP National Secretary Chief Bernard Ezeh. According to witnesses, after thirty minutes, Chime loyalists arrived at 10:00 AM in ten fully loaded 22-seat buses and attacked the Nnamani faction, seizing their placards and chasing them away, but not before two of Ezeh's aides were beaten up. The assembled youths then attempted to pull down the gate to the National Secretariat, but were prevented from doing so by security agents. They then proceeded to barricade the entrance to the complex so that party officials could neither enter nor escape. The group disbanded only after

former Enugu state party chairman Chief Onyioha Nwanjoku appealed for calm. According to press reports, the melee blocked roads leading to the PDP National Secretariat as well as the neighboring high court and Federal Inland Revenue Service for hours.

¶5. (SBU) Of two PDP factions in Anambra state, only one, led by former governorship candidate Andy Uba, a confidante of former President Obasanjo, held a congress. The other faction, led by State Party Chairman Tony Nwoye, complied with a state court order barring the state's party congresses on the grounds that the PDP may not have followed its own bylaws in conducting recent ward and local congresses. Despite the court injunction, party headquarters still sent officials, including Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials led by Commissioner Mike Nwuneli, to monitor the Uba faction's congress.

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South South: Delta State Achieves Consensus

¶6. (SBU) The Edo congress pitched Governor Osunbor and former Governor Samuel Ogbemudia's faction against a faction headed by Tony Anenih, former PDP Board of Trustees chairman. Although both factions claimed legitimacy, Abuja election monitors observed Governor Osunbor's faction. Members of the State House of Assembly, unhappy with the state of affairs within the PDP, boycotted both congresses.

¶7. (SBU) The two factions of the Bayelsa PDP fractured over the question of whether to hold elections or retain all incumbents in order to promote peace and unity among the party. The party deputy chairman called for elections on grounds of party unity; a caucus including Vice President Goodluck Jonathan wanted to return incumbents. According to press reports, on March 4 armed thugs at the Bayelsa State PDP Secretariat invaded party headquarters over the State Working Committee's suspension of various party members, including the newly elected State Chairman, the Speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Representatives, and several other members of the state House of Assembly.

¶8. (SBU) The Delta State congress, atypically, may have resolved an internal state party rift; all 29 members of the executive council were selected by consensus. Governor Uduaghan attributed the ability to reach consensus to intensive meetings held in advance of the congress to resolve party leaders' issues, stated media reports.

Comment

¶9. (SBU) The PDP national convention is scheduled for March 8, though a lawsuit filed by disaffected members of the party alleging lack of due process could still cause its

postponement. The court is scheduled to rule Friday March 7th, the day before the convention is scheduled to take place. It is unclear whether the PDP national convention in Abuja will be an anarchic free-for-all involving multiple, competing delegations jostling to represent certain states at the convention, or whether back-room deals will be struck in advance to unify state representation. Also uncertain is the extent to which the PDP leadership will be openly and fairly elected. If the past is an example, there will probably be a selection, rather than election, of the party's new leaders. The winners will be chosen in backroom deals on the margins of the conference and then "ratified" at the convention.

This message has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR